

Needham Human Rights Committee Meeting Minutes

June 16, 2016, 7:30 PM

(Recorder: Jeremy Sutherland)

Amelia Klein, chaired the meeting in the conference room of the Broadmeadow School, Needham, MA.

Committee members in attendance: Amelia Klein, Jen Howard Schroeder, Marlene Schultz, Cynthia Ganung, Barry Ehrlich, and Jeremy Sutherland.

Guests: Helen Giragosian, Kerry Hurwitch, Matt Schroeder, and Sgt. Rich Forbes

- **Minutes** of the May 19, 2016 NHRC meeting were unanimously approved.
- **Public Participation:** Time for public participation was offered. No members of the public attended this meeting.
- **Old Business:**
 1. Committee Membership: Matt Schroeder (Needham High School student) has applied and is waiting for an interview. Helen Giragosian and Kerry Hurwitch have also applied. Sgt. Forbes of the police department attended this meeting as a liaison from the police department.
 2. Protocol for Public Participation: With minor edits, the NHRC Protocol for Public Participation was adopted unanimously. This protocol will be published on our website and printed for distribution for any guests who attend future meetings.
 3. Refugee Resettlement Forum: Committee members enjoyed the event and noted the effective work done by the various speakers. Amelia noted the need to plan around other notable town events to maximize attendance.
 4. Follow-up Forum on Islam- This item was postponed from tonight's agenda. Marlene reported that she had not heard from Amira Quraishi about a proposal to organize a program with a focus on ISIS, together with Wellesley College. She will contact Amira during the summer.
 5. Statement after Orlando - The NHRC worked to craft a statement, prepared by Marlene and Jennifer, to address the tragedy in Orlando. This message was approved in an edited form and will be submitted for inclusion in local news. Barry asked the Committee for their input on what action the NHRC and other individuals can take in the wake of this event.
- **New Business:**
 1. Letter to NHRC: The Committee discussed if there was a need to reply to a concerning letter that was received following a recent event discussing the plight of refugees. The letter

referenced an article about the permissibility of domestic abuse within the Muslim religion and questioned whether permitting refugees who practice the Muslim religion to come to the US creates additional safety concerns. The committee discussed the source of the article as coming from a well-known source of Islamaphobia and also whether the author of the letter was asking the NHRC to do something in response. The Committee concluded there was no action needed at this time, except to acknowledge receipt. The Committee noted the imperative to continue education about the issues raised in this letter, and discussed how the NHRC should respond to community members with differences of opinion.

2. Needham Town Facebook-Page Rhetoric: Since the NHRC last met, a Needham resident used the town's Facebook page to seek out community members who shared his views and values of "white nationalism". A significant number of community members challenged this post directly and the post was eventually shut down. Sgt. Forbes noted that the police have been familiar with this individual in the past and that this incident was noticed when it occurred. Jennifer mentioned opportunities for collaboration with the Needham Diversity Initiative to counteract sentiments such as the ones expressed by this gentleman.
3. The Committee expressed appreciation for Jeremy's role as a student representative on the Committee for the past two years. The Committee wishes him success as he continues his journey advocating for human rights!

- Meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM